

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
for
November 19, 2009
MEETING NO. 10-09**

APPLICATION: HDC2010-00485
ADDRESS: 50 Maryland Avenue
ACCEPTED: October 13, 2009
45 DAY LIMIT: N/A
OWNER: Montgomery County,
Randy Hawkins, Agent
REQUEST: Review Proposed Annex
STAFF: Robin D. Ziek

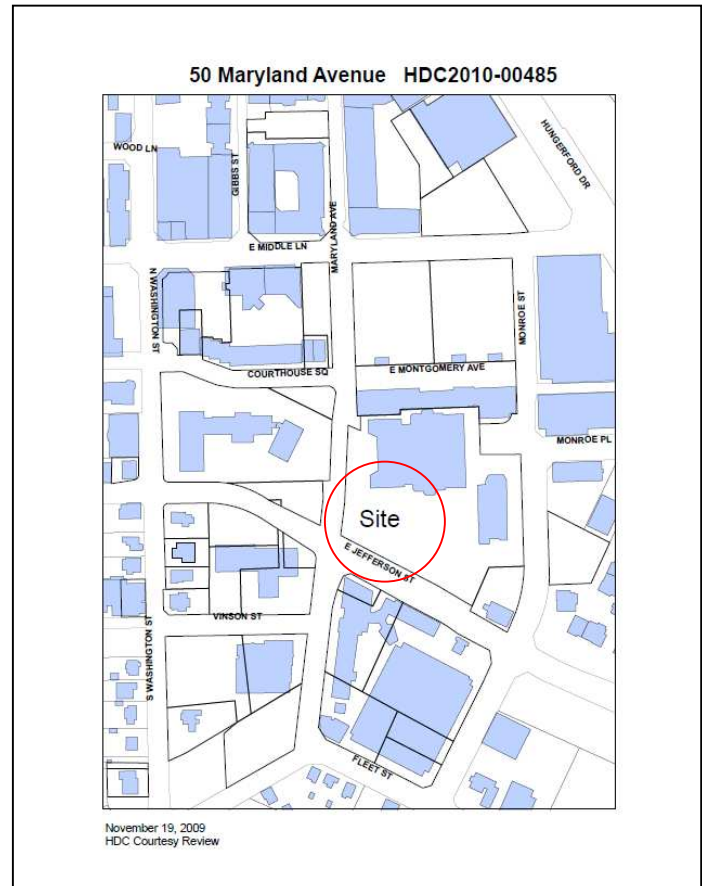
PROJECT SUMMARY:

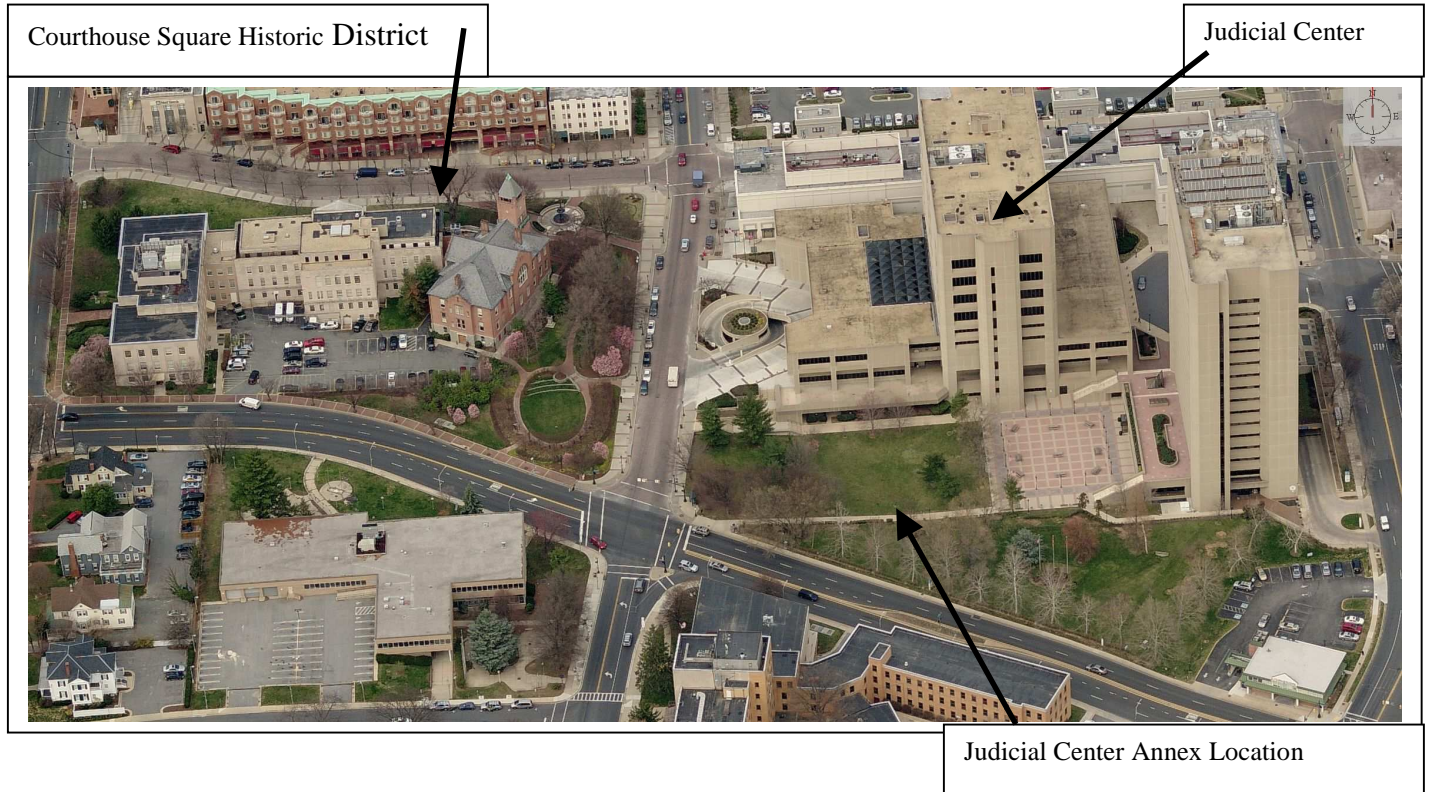
The Montgomery County Judicial Center Annex, at 50 Maryland Avenue, is directly across Maryland Avenue from the locally designated and National Register listed Courthouse Square Historic District, and specifically, the 1891 Red Brick Courthouse.

As is consistent with Article 25.04.04 of the Zoning Ordinance, the HDC provides a Courtesy Review on all new construction proposed on properties adjacent to a historic district, with a view to minimize impacts on the historic district and its setting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HDC note that the proposed Annex will have little impact on the Courthouse Square Historic District. See staff discussion below on proposed height, proposed architecture, proposed streetscape and relation to existing park and Historic District.





BACKGROUND: The County has submitted a Level 2 Site Plan application to the City of Rockville. The annex will consolidate existing Circuit Court functions located in the Gray Courthouse and the Red Brick Courthouse. These two courthouse structures are locally designated as historic and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places in the Courthouse Square Historic District. Planning for the continued use of these buildings is on-going, with office use being currently considered. The County's project team attended a Development Review Committee meeting on October 8 and October 29, 2009; comments from the various city divisions were provided on the 29th. A public meeting was held on November 9, 2009. The materials presented at that time are also included for the HDC's review.

Development Standards: This is in the MXTD zone, which the zoning ordinance describes as:

Intended for use in areas near Metro stations, it allows for high density development of retail, office, and residential uses consistent with the recommendations of the Plan.
Mixed-Use Transit District Zone ("MXTD")

City of Rockville Permits Required: Building, storm water management, and associated DPW and construction permits.

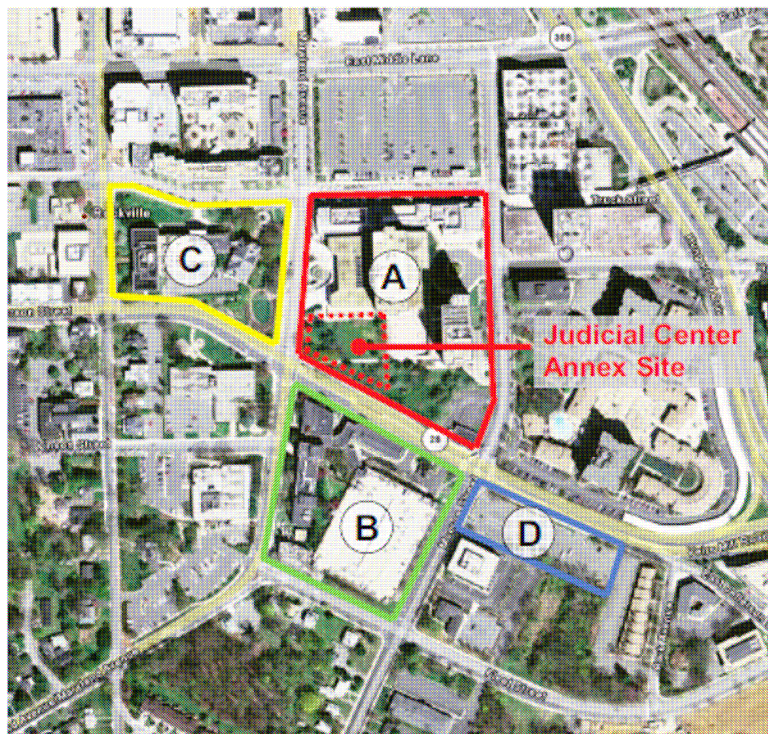
State of Maryland, Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) 106 Review: None

DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT and MATERIALS:

The proposed project site is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of East Jefferson and Maryland Avenue. This development block [see A below] bounded by East Jefferson, Maryland, Monroe and East Montgomery is 90% occupied with Montgomery County government buildings, including the Judicial Center and the Executive Office Building. The historic courthouse buildings [see C below] are located across Maryland Avenue, and front E. Montgomery Avenue, with entrances to the Gray Courthouse on East Jefferson and N. Washington Street. The area of Block C that is opposite the proposed Judicial Annex is the site of a memorial park commemorating those who died in the September 11th terrorist attack.

The site of the proposed Judicial Annex is currently landscaped as a public park, with access from the corner of Maryland and E. Jefferson, or internally, from the ground floor of the Judicial Center and from the Executive Office Building, as well as from the flight of steps leading to the plaza off of Monroe Street.

Government Core Facilities Optimization – Master Plan Study



Rockville Central Core Blocks

A – Judicial Center &
Executive Office Building

B – Council Office Building &
Parking Garage

C – Red Brick Courthouse,
Grey Courthouse & Grey
Courthouse Annex

D – Jury Parking Lot

The public park is not currently accessed from Maryland Avenue, with a stone wall providing an edge along the public sidewalk. Trees behind this wall do provide shade for the public sidewalk.

The proposed Judicial Annex will retain a public park that fronts East Jefferson. The street frontage along Maryland Avenue will be landscaped to maintain a green edge along the public sidewalk on Maryland Avenue, pulling the building's west edge well back from the sidewalk. This part of the project is also proposed to fulfill LEED requirements for environmental design, with stormwater management features incorporated into the architecture and site along Maryland Avenue.

The proposed architecture uses a Modern vocabulary, to relate to the existing government buildings within this block. The existing Judicial Center has a low entry feature, leading into the six-story tower beyond. The proposed Judicial Annex will also have six stories, but will take advantage of grade changes to exhibit a lower height (100 ft) than the existing Judicial Center tower. (See Circles 26 – 31 for proposed elevations, illustrating relative heights.)

The design of the new annex is similar to but different from the existing Judicial Center. Neither building, appropriately, makes reference to the historic courthouse buildings across the street. In this way, the historic buildings can be seen more clearly as designs of their day. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards* #3 discusses that "Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use..." This is a recognition that the physical historic record illustrates changing societal notions of architecture over time.

The proposed relationship of the proposed Judicial Annex to the Historic District appears to be unchanged from the existing condition. In part, this is due to the fact that the entrances to all the buildings involved in this project will not change. The Judicial Annex will not have its own entrance from Maryland Avenue, with all users from Maryland Avenue arriving at the Judicial Center through the existing entrance. With a proposed building height that is lower than the existing government structures within its block, and with the building being set back from Maryland Avenue, there should be no impact on the public's experience of the two courthouse buildings in the Historic District.

Please see the Official DGS web page for proposed design and analysis of the project, at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url=/content/DGS/DIR/OPD/Core.asp>.

A 43-page analysis is presented at this web site, at:

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/DGS/Dir/OPD/Resources/JCA-PreAppAreaMeeting.pdf>

